

The University of Chicago

AESTHETICS
IN ENGLISH SOCIAL REFORM:
RUSKIN AND HIS FOLLOWERS

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF
THE HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE
AND LITERATURE
1939

By
FRANK DANIEL CURTIN

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Aesthetics in English Social Reform: Ruskin and His Followers

By FRANK DANIEL CURTIN

I

FACILE ascriptions of indebtedness are, it is obvious, too often based upon loose parallels of thought or phrase. Yet even though one recognizes "the social mind," the currents of thought in a society, one must notice also that those currents are clarified by leading thinkers and writers. Such men, by their definite statement of ideas and their vivid transference of attitudes, give stimulus and outline to the thoughts of others. Carlyle gave both to a generation of Victorian idealists—to Dickens, to Kingsley, to Disraeli, to a group numerous and notable, with Ruskin prominent among them. The conclusions of John Stuart Mill found place in various fields of thought: political, economic, literary. The attitudes and ideas of John Ruskin, so often dismissed as sentimental and unpractical in his own time and after, were seminal in the social criticism of the late nineteenth century.

How widespread and profound Ruskin's stimulus was, has been suggested from time to time. One well-known detail is worth repeating:

When the Parliament of 1906 was elected, there was a great hubbub about the large contingent of Labour Members, and an ingenious journalist sent circulars to them asking them to state, What were the Books that had Influenced them? Some said one, and some another; but the book which appeared in the greatest number of lists was Ruskin's *Unto This Last*.¹

Under the auspices of the Ruskin Society in London the centenary of Ruskin's birth (1919) was celebrated by a series of lectures, and these and other tributes were collected and published by John Howard

¹ E. T. Cook, *The Life of Ruskin* (London, 1912), ii, 14.

Whitehouse;² again in 1934 such a collection was made.³ The notable variety of interests represented by the men whose opinions are displayed illustrates the breadth of Ruskin's appeal; among those men were Viscount Bryce, John Masefield, Eric Gill, Sir William Rothenstein, Laurence Binyon, Dean Inge, and John A. Hobson. The distinction of these men gives weight to their comments. One dramatic anecdote in the most recent collection is vouched for by the Bishop of Birmingham, Dr. E. W. Barnes:

Some thirty years ago there was in South Africa a young Indian barrister doing well, rather remarkably well, in his profession. He was about to take a somewhat long railway journey, and a friend gave him *Unto This Last*. The friend saw him a fortnight later. That young barrister said, "the book was an inspiration. Nay, more, it was a gospel for life." He had ceased his practice at the Bar. He was going to be a follower of John Ruskin. You know his name, of course. They call him Mahatma Gandhi.⁴

Perhaps in such stimulus—to thinkers, executives, poets, and workmen—lies the chief debt of his contemporaries, and of his successors, to Ruskin as social critic. The source of it lies in many of his attributes: in the personal charm which drew Oxford students about him and helped to set them digging on the Hinksey Road, Arnold Toynbee among them; in his voice, that *vox angelica* which Oliver Elton remembered, which Sir Raymond Unwin speaks of as the "musical voice" which first turned him to social reform; but pre-eminently in his literary style—in his ability to build up images of idyllic past and tawdry present at Carshalton Springs, to satirize classical economics by comparing it with "a science of gymnastics which assumed that men had no skeletons,"⁵ to elicit pity for the lot of the poor and excite indignation toward the society which connived at such poverty. These qualities of Ruskin and these talents gained attention for him and stirred his audience.

Yet the concern here is not with them, nor with the breadth of Rus-

² John Howard Whitehouse (ed.), *John Ruskin: Letters written on the occasion of the Centenary of his Birth* (London, 1919); *Ruskin Centenary Addresses* (London, 1919); *Ruskin the Prophet and Other Centenary Studies* (New York, 1920). See also G. B. Shaw, *Ruskin's Politics* (London, 1921).

³ John Howard Whitehouse (ed.), *To the Memory of Ruskin* (Cambridge, 1934).

⁴ *To the Memory of Ruskin*. Patrick Geddes attests to Gandhi's use of "Ruskin's criticism of the machine industry and its money economics." "Our City of Thought," *Survey*, liv (August 1, 1925), 489.

⁵ John Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, in *Works*, ed. Cook and Wedderburn, Library Edition, 39 vols. (London, 1903-1912), xvii, 26. All future references to the works of Ruskin will be to this edition. Each volume will be identified in the edition by a number in parenthesis after the title.

kin's stimulus; it is rather with the acceptance of certain of Ruskin's ideas. A single feature of Ruskin's thought can serve to illustrate that Ruskin was more than a stimulus in subsequent English social criticism, that he was the source of recurrent themes basic to the writings of later social critics, themselves by no means inconsiderable. Important among such themes are those resulting from Ruskin's application of aesthetics to social criticism and reform.

II

WHEN, about the middle of his writing career, shortly before 1860, Ruskin turned from art to social criticism, he was merely shifting his chief attention to the other of two fields which he had more and more frequently declared to be interrelated. And as in art criticism Ruskin had increasingly attempted to display the influence of society upon art; so in social criticism he continually asserted the importance of art and, more generally, of beauty and of the creative impulse in human life, proclaiming the need for both of these latter in Victorian society. This application of aesthetic judgments to contemporary social conditions, especially those of environment and work, is a distinctive contribution of Ruskin to English social criticism.⁶

Ruskin considered art the expression not of some special aesthetic faculty but of the whole personality of the artist—his wisdom, his sincerity, his love of beauty, his refinement, his imagination.⁷ Great art,

⁶ H. A. Needham in *Le développement de l'esthétique sociologique en France et en Angleterre au XIX^e siècle* (Paris, 1926), p. 2, defines three parts of aesthetics, metaphysical, psychological, and sociological: "Nous pouvons donc distinguer trois parties de l'esthétique, parties qui ont leurs relations l'une avec l'autre, mais qui ont leurs propres sphères: la première, abstraite ou métaphysique, qui cherche une définition du Beau; la deuxième, psychologique, qui constate l'effet de la beauté sur l'âme humaine, et de cette étude tire certains déductions relatives à la 'forme' dans l'art; la troisième, sociologique, qui cherche à déterminer la place de la beauté dans la vie et son rôle dans les activités humaines." By the standards of his own sociological aesthetics Ruskin judged the industrial society in which he lived, attacking especially the ugliness of environment and the uncreative nature of work.

⁷ Among the many interpretations of Ruskin's aesthetics none stands alone, definitive. Henry Ladd's *The Victorian Morality of Art* illustrates the well-nigh insuperable complexities of only one phase of the subject, the shifting metaphysical foundations of Ruskin's art criticism. Wilenski makes a different approach, the biographical, to what he calls "an appalling muddle." (*John Ruskin, an Introduction to Further Study of His Life and Work* [New York, 1933], p. 192.) Wilenski nevertheless finds Ruskin "a great man and a genius," p. 28). It is to H. A. Needham that one must go for a full analysis of Ruskin's sociological aesthetics. Each critic—these three, and Collingwood, Cook, de la Sizeranne, Roe—reads Ruskin with a special interest and writes with a special emphasis. In the summary which follows, those ideas are stressed which Ruskin draws from in his social criticism.

Ruskin says, "is literally great. It compasses and calls forth the entire human spirit, whereas any other kind of art, being more or less small or narrow, compasses and calls forth only *part* of the human spirit."⁸ An expression of the full character of the artist, it is not indulged in for art's sake, for pride in skill alone, in self-expression alone. It is "the expression of man's delight in God's work." It is the artist's interpretation, his realization of the world: "Wherever art is practised for its own sake, and the delight of the workman is in what he *does* and *produces*, instead of in what he *interprets* or *exhibits*—there art has an influence of the most fatal kind on brain and heart, and it issues, if long so pursued, in the *destruction both of intellectual power and moral principle*; whereas art, devoted humbly and self-forgetfully to the clear statement and record of the facts of the universe, is always helpful and beneficent to mankind, full of comfort, strength, and salvation."⁹ "To mankind," including the artist himself: the artist in fulfilling his proper function as recorder and interpreter of the world about him for all men brings completion to himself. Thus, Ruskin declares, ". . . you cannot so much as once look at the ruffings of the plumes of a pelican pluming itself after it has been in the water, or carefully draw the contours of the wing either of a vulture or a common swift, or paint the rose and vermillion on that of a flamingo, without receiving almost a new conception of the meaning of form and colour in creation. . . ."¹ The artist gains by losing himself: he achieves understanding only when he comes down from the ivory tower; and only then he finds happiness. His life becomes "the life of the crowned spirit, moving as a light in creation . . . happy in what it has securely done—happier in what, day by day, it may as securely hope; happiest at the close of life, when the right hand begins to forget its cunning, to remember, that there was never a touch of the chisel or the pencil it wielded, but has added to the knowledge and quickened the happiness of mankind."² Art, to summarize, is not an escape from life but a means toward it. Henry Ladd stresses this aspect of Ruskin's theories:

Ruskin's is the first theory that I know of to suggest that in the activity of art itself there lay the ultimate social value, the means to the end of good living. He did not merely relate art more closely to living than former theorists, but suggested that art was itself a good life.³

⁸ *Modern Painters*, iii (v), 66.

⁹ *Two Paths* (xvi), pp. 290, 268.

¹ *Lectures on Art* (xx), p. 105.

² *Two Paths* (xvi), p. 292.

³ Henry Ladd, *The Victorian Morality of Art* (New York, 1932), p. 339.

Nor is this artistic satisfaction reserved to a small group; it is open to the artisan as well as to the artist. Ruskin draws the crafts and the arts together. Decorative art, for instance, is not a degraded or separate kind; all art may be decorative, and the greatest art yet produced has been.⁴ "In a truly civilized and disciplined state," the crafts would all be fine arts, and the artists would be, as they were in medieval Italy, apprenticed to craftsmen.⁵ And Ruskin would widen the term *craftsman* to include most workmen. As the true artist is only a superior workman, "a beautiful development of tailor or carpenter,"⁶ so the workman can in most undertakings find the joy of the artist in his work. It is this idea of Ruskin's which finds full expression in "The Nature of Gothic" in the second volume of *The Stones of Venice*. There Ruskin differentiates three types of architectural ornament: servile (for example Greek or Egyptian), "in which the execution or power of the inferior workman is entirely subjected to the intellect of the higher"; constitutional (medieval), where, though he is under the authority of his superior, the workman can display his own creative skill; and revolutionary (illustrated by the Renaissance), "in which no executive authority is admitted."⁷ The condition of the workman in the first type is slavery; he is a tool, not a man. Here is the basis of Ruskin's attack on machines and mechanical labor:

Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in all their actions. If you will have that precision out of them, and make their fingers measure degrees like cog-wheels, and their arms strike curves like compasses, you must unhumanize them.⁸

From such degradation men rebel, as they will from the slavery which in England the demand for finish imposes upon them.

As a creative act, art is a means to life for the individual artist, the individual workman; as a product it is a source of joy and moral effect to society. "Depend upon it," Ruskin declares, "whatever value [creative work] may possess, by reason of the painter's skill, its chief and final value, to any nation, depends upon its being able to exalt and refine, as well as to please."⁹ For art is the vehicle of beauty and of truth. Impressions of beauty are, for Ruskin, not sensual, not intellec-

⁴ *Two Paths* (xvi), p. 320.

⁵ *Time and Tide* (xvii), p. 426.

⁶ *Fors Clavigera*, i (xxvii), 186.

⁷ *Stones of Venice*, ii (x), 188 f.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁹ *Joy for Ever* (xvi), p. 35.

tual, but moral; beauty elevates and ennobles living.¹ Love of beauty, "an essential part of all healthy human nature . . . is itself wholly good."² And Ruskin remarks: "As the art of life is learned, it will be found at last that all lovely things are also necessary . . . because man does not live by bread only, but also by the desert manna, by every wondrous word and unknowable work of God."³ The artist transfers his "delight in God's work"—and his knowledge of it also. One characteristic of all great art, Ruskin asserts, "is the earnest and intense seizing of natural facts."⁴ The highest fine arts endeavor "to relate to us the utmost ascertainable truth respecting visible things and moral feelings." The artist therefore in such transference performs a social service:

All the great arts have for their object either the support or exaltation of human life,—usually both. . . . You must have the right moral state first, or you cannot have the art. But when the art is once obtained, its reflected action enhances and completes the moral state out of which it arose, and, above all, communicates the exultation to other minds which are already morally capable of the like.⁵

This social function of art is democratic, not reserved for an élite. As the workman should be able to express himself in his craft, so there should be a "close and healthy relation of the fine arts with material use." The objects of high art are twofold, "*to state a true thing*, or to *adorn a serviceable one*," its offices being to give "precision and charm to truth; . . . precision and charm to service." Indeed the main function of art is to give "brightness to life," by making delightful the houses men live in and the articles they use at home and work. Moreover, "from highest to lowest, health of art has first depended on reference to industrial use," and there is clear progression from simple cups to Cellini's vases, from cottage roofs to palaces.⁶ Nor should great art be a luxury, for the rich only. Always needs must come before splendor. No nation has the right to permit luxury before all its poor are taken care of.

The effect of art upon society is a recurrent theme in Ruskin's writings; still more prominent is his illustration of the effect of society

¹ *Modern Painters*, ii (iv), 42; 46 f.

² *Lectures on Art* (xx), p. 90.

³ *Unto This Last* (xvii), p. 111.

⁴ *Two Paths* (xvi), p. 287.

⁵ *Lectures on Art* (xx), pp. 24, 25, 46.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 95, 96, 107, 108.

upon art. It is this idea which lies behind *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, *The Stones of Venice*; and probably it was Ruskin's awareness of this which, more than any other feature of his art theory, led him into social criticism. He had found in Venice a lesson for England; he found in the art of Victorian England the weaknesses which characterized Venetian art in its decline. Particularly in architecture was the state of national life and character expressed, for good architecture is produced only by "prevalent and eager" national taste, or desire for beauty. Art expresses the nation, its virtues, its vices: ". . . a nation cannot be affected by any vice, or weakness, without expressing it, legibly, and for ever, either in bad art, or by want of art; and . . . there is no national virtue, small or great, which is not manifestly expressed in all the art which circumstances enable the people possessing that virtue to produce."⁷ Victorian life is illustrated by the iron railings before public houses, by the cast-iron ornaments on railroad bridges, by the statue at Kensington labelled "English. Present Century. No. I," a statue in black and white marble of a Newfoundland dog trampling a serpent, "the most perfectly and roundly ill-done thing which, as yet, in my whole life, I ever saw produced by art."⁸

From aesthetic theories such as these, the transition to social criticism, a transition best represented by *The Political Economy of Art* (1857; later republished as *A Joy for Ever*), was a gradual and almost inevitable one.

III

THE degradation of contemporary art Ruskin continues to deplore in his later writings, adding the warning: "Continue to make that forbidden deity [Mammon] your principal one, and soon no more art, no more science, no more pleasure will be possible."⁹ But Ruskin applies aesthetic judgments more widely, to contemporary life, repeatedly declaring the need for beauty in the countryside and the cities, and in other products besides the decorative arts; in the loss of such beauty, and even of concern for it, he discovers one cause of general unhappiness. He extends his criticism. It is not the element of beauty alone which is neglected in production; quantity of products is considered, quality ignored. And as he attacks machinery and pleads for craftsman-

⁷ *Crown of Wild Olive* (xviii), pp. 434, 437.

⁸ *Fors Clavigera*, i (xxvii), 81.

⁹ *Crown of Wild Olive* (xviii), p. 458.

ship instead of mechanized industry, he amplifies those views upon work which he has found to be corollaries of his doctrine of art and has announced in *The Stones of Venice*.

Throughout Ruskin's criticism runs the theme "There is no Wealth but Life." He points to the loss of vital wealth, material and spiritual, in Victorian England. He repeatedly calls attention to the ugliness of contemporary England—the destruction of the countryside and the growth of the sprawling cities, of London, "a ghastly heap of fermenting brickwork."¹ England has vitiated the air, and polluted the water. Every river in England has been turned into "a common sewer, so that you cannot so much as baptize an English baby but with filth, unless you hold its face out in the rain; and *even that* falls dirty."² Furthermore, Ruskin finds that what he calls the essential spiritual qualities of life—Admiration, Hope and Love—are all of them wanting or distorted. He does not mean these terms to be taken lightly. "For Admiration, you have learned contempt and conceit. There is no lovely thing ever done by man that you care for, or can understand. . . ." Country and city are alike blighted. The suburbs of London: "What a pestilence of [ugly houses], and unseemly plague of builders' work—as if the bricks of Egypt had multiplied like its lice, and alighted like its locusts—has fallen on the suburbs of loathsome London?"³ And the results of living in such surroundings:

It is not possible to have any right morality, happiness, or art, in any country where the cities are thus built, or thus, let me rather say, clotted and coagulated; spots of a dreadful mildew, spreading by patches and blotches over the country they consume. You must have lovely cities, crystallised, not coagulated, into form, limited in size, and not casting out the scum and scurf of them into an encircling eruption of shame, but girded each with its sacred pomœrium, and with garlands of gardens full of blossoming trees, and softly guided streams.⁴

The lovely cities are a dream. Industrialism spreads its blight throughout England, destroying everywhere the sources of human happiness—not least, to Ruskin's mind, the beauty which man's spirit requires. Ruskin adds to the indictment. The worker, living in an increasingly joyless environment, can no longer find pleasure in his work. Mechanized industry has replaced the crafts. Ruskin examines the ef-

¹ *Crown of Wild Olive* (xviii), p. 406.

² *Fors Clavigera*, i (xxvii), 92 ff.

³ *Fors*, iii (xxvii), 528.

⁴ *Lectures on Art* (xx), p. 113.

fect of such work upon the workmen. In *The Stones of Venice* he had remarked:

It is verily this degradation of the operative into a machine, which, more than any other evil of the times, is leading the mass of nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature to themselves. . . . It is not that men are ill fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure.⁵

Division of labor, Ruskin had said, is division of men.

It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided; but the men:—Divided into mere segments of men—broken into small fragments and crumbs of life; so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin, or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin, or the head of a nail.⁶

Manual labor is not degrading if it is governed by intellect; and head and hand are not to be separated. The workman must be allowed the satisfaction of creation, for just as “life without industry is guilt,” so “industry without art is brutality.”⁷

A distinction in terms is needed. “Mechanical work” is uncreative, and permits no freedom to the workman; it may or may not utilize machinery, though use of machinery requires such work. It is not true that Ruskin finds no value in machinery. He recognizes in it the “power of shortening labor, or otherwise accomplishing what human strength unaided could not” (in digging channels; in irrigation).⁸ And Ruskin permits the use of wind-machinery and waterwheels when he establishes Saint George’s Guild. But steam machinery has destroyed the countryside and polluted the air of “the horrible nests” called towns;⁹ and it has added to the degradation of workmen. Such observations lead Ruskin into extravagant recommendations. Manufactories should be reduced to the lowest limit, “so that nothing may ever be made of iron that can as effectually be made of wood or stone; and nothing moved by steam that can be as effectually moved by natural forces.”¹ Statements like these often support the charge of medievalism

⁵ *Stones of Venice*, ii (x), 194.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁷ *Lectures on Art* (xx), p. 93.

⁸ *Munera Pulveris* (xvii), p. 156.

⁹ *Fors*, i (xxvii), 91.

¹ *Lectures on Art* (xx), p. 113.

made against Ruskin;² they nevertheless dramatize the hazards to human welfare in the use of machinery. (Patrick Geddes, repeating Ruskin's indictment, offers a less quixotic solution.)³ The whole analysis of work⁴ which Ruskin makes leads him to consider the vital costs of production when he theorizes upon economics—thus providing the basis for an important part of the economic ideas of J. A. Hobson.

Ruskin applies his standard of vital value to work; he applies it to products also. In the preface to *Munera Pulveris* he asserts that a knowledge of the fine arts is essential to economic theorists:

The following pages contain, I believe, the first accurate analysis of the laws of Political Economy which has been published in England. Many treatises, within their scope, correct, have appeared in contradiction of the views popularly received; but no exhaustive examination of the subject was possible to any person unacquainted with the value of the products of the highest industries, commonly called the "Fine Arts"; and no one acquainted with the nature of those industries has, so far as I know, attempted, or even approached the task.⁵

Ruskin's interest in aesthetics carries him toward a definition of "intrinsic" as opposed to exchange value. For illustration he chooses Parisian lithographs of the cancan and the paintings of Tintoretto, to comment caustically: "The city of Paris naturally supposed itself, and on all hitherto believed or stated principles of political economy, was, infinitely richer in the possession of a large number of these lithographic stones (not to speak of countless oil pictures and marble carvings of similar character), than Venice in the possession of those rags of mildewed canvas, flaunting in the south wind and its salt rain."⁶ Production needs to be judged not by quantity or profits only but by quality, by intrinsic value. "To be 'valuable,' . . . is to 'avail towards life.' A truly valuable or availing thing is that which leads to life with its whole strength. . . . The value of a thing, therefore, is independent of opinion, and of quantity."⁷ In ignoring such a basic definition, political economy is "a bastard science." Upon the basis of vital value,

² See Dean Inge on the unpracticality of such suggestions, in an essay generally laudatory, "Ruskin and Plato," *Ruskin the Prophet*, ed. Whitehouse, pp. 25 ff.

³ See below, p. 234.

⁴ See also "Work," *Crown of Wild Olive* (xviii), pp. 401 ff.

⁵ *Munera Pulveris* (xvii), p. 131. The passage displays the overstatement which so often in Ruskin obscures a brilliant insight or a cogent conclusion; see below, p. 215.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁷ *Unto This Last* (xvii), p. 84 f. Ruskin defines "effectual" value also, value in use, *Munera Pulveris* (xvii), p. 154.

Ruskin defines prosperity: “. . . the prosperity of any nation is in exact proportion to the quantity of labor which it spends in obtaining and employing means of life.” Consumption must be the end of production, —not profits, “for as consumption is the end and aim of production, so life is the end and aim of consumption.”⁸

In *The Crown of Wild Olive*, in *Time and Tide*, and in *Fors Clavigera* Ruskin uses his definitions of “wealth,” “intrinsic value,” and “prosperity” to test contemporary England. His judgment is damning.

Our cities are a wilderness of spinning wheels instead of palaces; yet the people have not clothes. We have blackened every leaf of English greenwood with ashes, and the people die of cold; our harbors are a forest of merchant ships, and the people die of hunger.⁹

Poverty—of body and spirit—spreads wide; Ruskin multiplies examples of misery, of ennui, of ugliness. The aesthetics from which he launched his wider criticism retains his interest and helps to differentiate his judgments from those of his contemporaries.

Yet Ruskin was never content with theorizing about art, sociology, or economics, or even with criticizing contemporary life from the standpoint of his theories; he cannot be reproached, as Carlyle has been, for want of specific proposals for reform. The various attempts he made to advertise his ideas—by road-building (Oxford students learned the need, if not the advantages, of manual labor), street-cleaning, establishing a tea-shop (no advertising and best quality), and helping to maintain ancient handicrafts on the Isle of Man—had at least the success of publicity. The most famous of Ruskin's projects, Saint George's Guild, was again an advertisement of his ideas: masterhood, coöperation, education, guild control of product, abolition of steam-machinery. The high hopes Ruskin had for the experiment were disappointed rapidly, and almost completely.¹ The vows of the members were somewhat arbitrary, including implicit obedience to the Master; regulations of daily lives extended even to an *index expurgatorius* of the classics.² It is evident that at times in his practical projects Ruskin ignored the discretion he had once remarked upon: “In a science dealing with so subtle elements as those of human nature, it is only possible to answer for the final truth of principles, not for the direct success of plans; and . . . in the best of these last, what can be immediately accomplished is

⁸ *Unto This Last* (xvii), pp. 98, 104.

⁹ *Crown of Wild Olive* (xviii), p. 502.

¹ Sheffield Museum is, however, a relic of the Guild.

² *Fors Clavigera*, vi (xxviii), 500 f.

always questionable, and what can be finally accomplished, inconceivable."³ Yet, on the other hand, the housing reforms he instituted in the slums of London under the management of Octavia Hill were highly influential.⁴ Ruskin realized the almost superficial nature of such work: "The best that can be done in this way will be useless ultimately, unless the deep source of the misery be cut off."⁵ But again Ruskin's work called attention to his ideas—to his criticism of cities. Fit lodging for the poor is an immediate need, he knows, yet the way is long and difficult:

And providing lodgment for them means a great deal of vigorous legislature, and cutting down of vested interests that stand in the way, and after that, or before that, so far as we can get it, thorough sanitary and remedial action in the houses that we have; and then the building of more, strongly, beautifully, and in groups of limited extent, kept in proportion to their streams and walled round, so that there may be no festering and wretched suburb anywhere, but clean and busy street within, and the open country without, with a belt of beautiful garden and orchard round the walls, so that from any part of the city perfectly fresh air and grass, and sight of far horizon, might be reachable in a few minutes' walk. This the final aim; but in immediate action every minor and possible good to be instantly done, when, and as, we can; roofs mended that have holes in them—fences patched that have gaps in them—walls buttressed that totter—and floors propped that shake; cleanliness and order enforced with our own hands and eyes, till we are breathless, every day.⁶

Once more Ruskin makes proposals which might seem Utopian. The garden cities of today, and the great development of municipal low-cost housing in England since the World War suggest that in this respect as in many others Ruskin's theories and reforms have proved practical.⁷

IV

RUSKIN's social criticism is more definite than that of his avowed master Carlyle in proposals for reform; and Ruskin becomes detailed and analytical in his consideration of education and economics, whereas Carlyle furnishes only generalizations—forceful and stimulating, but

³ *Unto This Last* (xvii), p. 23.

⁴ See Cook, *The Life of Ruskin*, ii, 118 ff.

⁵ *Fors Clavigera*, i (xxvii), 144.

⁶ *Sesame and Lilies* (xviii), p. 183.

⁷ See E. T. Cook, *Life of Ruskin*, ii, 137 ff.; and Whitehouse, ed., *Ruskin the Prophet, passim*. Notice might be made of government training for youth; old age pensions; unemployment fund.

undeveloped. Nor is Carlyle in his social writings attentive to beauty, or to the importance of art in society. As they express their attitudes toward work, the two men differ. Work is a duty to Carlyle: "the God-given mandate, *Work thou in Welldoing*, lies mysteriously written, in Promethean Prophetic Characters, in our hearts."⁸ And again Carlyle writes: "The latest Gospel in this world is, Know thy work and do it." For "a man perfects himself by working. . . . The blessed glow of Labour is in him, is it not as purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up, and of sour smoke itself there is made bright blessed flame!" Work as a means of developing oneself, as a duty—these are Carlyle's ideas. Not for happiness in work or in the results of it does Carlyle plead: "The 'wages' of every noble Work do yet lie in Heaven or else Nowhere."⁹ Happiness is not Carlyle's aim; "'there is in man,'" says Teufelsdröckh, "'a Higher than Love of Happiness: he can do without Happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness!'"¹⁰ But for Ruskin happiness is an aim in life—joy in the aspect of the world and in the arts, and joy in creative work. Work is valuable in itself, Ruskin asserts, as opposed to idleness, but the kind and object of labor need to be considered;² and Ruskin undertakes an analysis of work which Carlyle disregards.

In many instances one must go outside the field of literature to find contemporary parallels for Ruskin's analyses and reforms, parallels useful in illuminating Ruskin's thought but seldom illustrating influence in either direction. One finds not in England but in France, in the writings of Auguste Comte, the body of ideas which most closely corresponds with Ruskin's upon sociological aesthetics: in the stress both men give to the importance of art in the development of the individual (by means of creative activity or education) and in the perfecting of society; in their attitudes toward the effect of society upon art; in their consideration of the relations of art and industry.³ But Ruskin arrived at his theories independently and introduced them into English social criticism and reform.

Indeed, Ruskin's ignorance of the thought of his contemporaries (the "General Index" of the Library Edition reveals the omissions: Socialists, economists, educational theorists, aestheticians) is a notable cause

⁸ Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, in *Works*, Centenary Edition, 30 vols. (New York, 1896-1901), II, 146.

⁹ Carlyle, *Past and Present*, *ibid.*, x, 196, 203.

¹⁰ Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, *ibid.*, I, 153.

² *Crown of Wild Olive* (xviii), 389 f.

³ H. A. Neeham has traced the similarities with some care, pp. 114 ff.

of his failure to attract to himself a considerable body of followers. One can understand, for example, how he and the Positivists failed to work together by reference to the public debate between him and Frederic Harrison in 1876. Ruskin having seen an article that Harrison, whom he knew and liked, had written on Positivism, "a gushing article on Humanity," replies in an open letter, punning on the name of Comte, asking for results of evolution, and declaring: "I don't find the advocates of Evolution much given to studying either men, women, or roses; I perceive them to be mostly occupied with frogs and lice."⁴ A month later, Harrison, who allowed no one to take the name of Comte in vain, published his answer in the *Fortnightly Review*.⁵ He tells Ruskin of Comte's admiration for and understanding of the Middle Ages and suggests that Ruskin look at Comte's books. Ruskin with other prophets has impeded science; hope in the human race must be founded on patience and "in a wider survey of men and things."⁶ Harrison also writes directly to Ruskin: "I owe you," he declares, "and the age owes you, profound gratitude for much noble teaching; and it is very sad to me to find you reviling other teachers to whom we owe much, and who know a thousand things about which you have told us nothing."⁷ Ruskin ends the debate:

The only word I have applied to Comte, in my whole letter, is "unique." . . . I have never read a word he has written,—never heard anything about him that interested me,—and never represented, or misrepresented, him, in any manner whatsoever. . . .

I did not write to my friend as a "student of Positivism," for I have no idea what positivism means.⁸

The disagreement clearly illustrates Ruskin's disregard for contemporary thinkers, even for a thinker so close to him in one field of thought as Auguste Comte, and it displays an intolerance which might well have alienated the Positivists. Frederic Harrison, whose "life may be described as an attempt to introduce Comte's Humanist sociology into England,"⁹ for twenty years leader of English Positivism, may well speak for his group. Yet Harrison himself continued to find Ruskin praiseworthy, and wrote of him at length many years later in *Tenny-*

⁴ *Fors Clavigera*, VI (xxviii), 614, 622.

⁵ Frederic Harrison, "Past and Present," *Fortnightly Review*, xx (July 1, 1876), 93-105.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁷ Quoted in *Fors Clavigera*, vi (xxviii), 662.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 663 f.

⁹ "Frederic Harrison," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (fourteenth edition, 1932), xi, 219.

son, *Ruskin, Mill, and Other Literary Estimates*, commending his "noble Evangel," remarking, "I believe that his teachers and my teachers are essentially one, and may yet be combined in the greater harmony that is to be."¹

Ruskin was not a member of any contemporary group; nor did any significant body of reformers in the later years of the century take Ruskin as master. Let Edward Pease speak for the Fabians as he surveys the sources of Fabian thought:

I have not included the writings of Ruskin, Socialist in outlook as some of them undoubtedly are, because I think that the value of his social teachings was concealed from most of us at that time by reaction against his religious medievalism, and indifference to his gospel of art. Books so eminently adapted to young ladies at mid-Victorian schools did not appeal to modernists educated by Comte and Spencer.²

Bernard Shaw adds a comment verifying Pease:

It is a curious fact that of the three great propagandist amateurs of political economy, Henry George, Marx, and Ruskin, Ruskin alone seems to have had no effect on the Fabians. Here and there in the Socialist movement workmen turned up who had read *Fors Clavigera* or *Unto This Last*; and some of the more well-to-do no doubt had read the first chapter of *Munera Pulveris*. But Ruskin's name was hardly mentioned in the Fabian Society. My explanation is that, barring Olivier, the Fabians were inveterate Philistines.³

Whatever the explanation, neither the Fabians nor any other influential body accepted from Ruskin their distinctive theories of society or reform.⁴

There were, it is true, numerous Ruskin Societies, as well as the Guild of St. George. "They had," Cook declares, "a considerable effect in spreading Ruskin's influence and increasing the circulation of his books, which it should be remembered had for many years been neither advertised nor noticed in the newspapers."⁵ But these Societies, instrumental in spreading Ruskin's teaching, were not composed of eminent men. Perhaps the most notable publication of a Ruskin Society was the

¹ New York: The Macmillan Co., 1902; pp. 50 f.

² Edward R. Pease, *History of the Fabian Society* (London, 1916), p. 27.

³ Bernard Shaw, "Appendix," *ibid.*, p. 263.

⁴ Indirectly, through William Morris, Ruskin's ideas penetrated English Socialism; see below, pp. 216 ff.

⁵ Cook, *Life of Ruskin*, ii, 443; see also John A. Hobson, *John Ruskin, Social Reformer* (Boston, 1898), pp. 349 ff.

quarterly, *Saint George*, founded in 1898, under the editorship of John Howard Whitehouse. The articles of this magazine, with few exceptions, were devoted to generous and uncritical praise of Ruskin, with broad interpretations of his work in art, morals, and society.⁶ Ruskin College, founded in 1899 at Oxford, pays tribute to Ruskin in its name, and Ruskin's teaching "furnished a frame of reference for the students who started it. . . . 'Unto This Last' served to give unity and purpose to their enterprise. Despite all the wrangles, battles, and deviations, Ruskin's teachings furnished a kind of anchor against storms, in the early days of the labor college."⁷ And Ruskin College has been influential in the education of labor leaders of the twentieth century.

It was, however, chiefly through individuals that Ruskin's social criticism penetrated into the thought of the late nineteenth century. Men who had personal relations with Ruskin—George Allen, who applied Ruskin's principles to the book trade; biographers and editors of Ruskin's work: William Collingwood, Sir Edward T. Cook, and Alexander Wedderburn—these men have been well known as disciples of Ruskin; as has Octavia Hill, whose early work under Ruskin in the tenement districts of London has borne fruit. They have helped to spread Ruskin's ideas. Yet they are not eminent as independent thinkers. It is rather to other men that one looks to see the acceptance of Ruskin's ideas. Among the immediate followers of Ruskin, those men who took some of their basic themes directly from Ruskin's writing, three stand out,⁸ for the distinction of their own work and for the extent of their indebtedness to Ruskin: William Morris, craftsman and socialist; Patrick Geddes, biologist and city-planner; and John A. Hobson, economist. Morris's discipleship is common knowledge. Geddes declared his debt to Ruskin in two brief studies of him and by frequent references to his writing; the merit of Geddes's own work is coming to slow recognition among literary students in America, especially since Lewis Mumford in two of his latest books, *The Technics of Civilization* and *The Culture of Cities*, has proclaimed Geddes his master. John A. Hobson has been one of the leading economists of the past generation;⁹ he has also contributed the most valuable analysis of Ruskin's

⁶ *Saint George*, ed. John Howard Whitehouse, Birmingham and London, i (1898), etc.

⁷ Charles A. Beard, "Ruskin and the Babble of Tongues," *New Republic*, xxxvii (August 5, 1936), 372; see also Max Beer, *History of British Socialism*, 2 vols. (London, 1919-20), II, 352.

⁸ Others: W. H. Mallock, Edward Carpenter, Arnold Toynbee, William Smart.

⁹ See Paul Homan, "John A. Hobson," *Contemporary Economic Thought* (New York, 1928).

social criticism, *John Ruskin, Social Reformer*, published in 1898. In that book and in various articles since, and in his recent autobiography *Confessions of an Economic Heretic*, Hobson asserts his own discipleship.¹

These men cannot be termed followers merely. They selected from Ruskin's writings those ideas which seemed significant to them; and they amplified those ideas in various ways and made new applications of them. In doing so, they repaid to a degree their debt to Ruskin. For, qualifying their praise, they recognized and avoided many of the weaknesses in Ruskin which in his own day impeded acceptance of his thought and which still repel many readers. The extravagance of Ruskin—the almost hysterical denunciations, the occasional wildly erratic judgments, the purple patches of his early style, the incoherence of *Fors Clavigera*—typify to more temperate critics the excesses of romanticism. Such faults suggest "hyperaesthesia" and sometimes incipient madness. They show too the distressing egotism which appears also in Ruskin's moralizing. And didacticism is no longer fashionable. Perhaps "the will of God in the earth alters"; perhaps a dogmatic exposition of the divine plan seems increasingly to be impertinent. Ruskin was extravagant; his followers pruned their styles and more carefully pondered their judgments. Ruskin was didactic; his followers substituted persuasion for lecture and suggestion for sermon. And they did not follow Ruskin in deliberately eschewing much contemporary thought. They read Ruskin, but they listened to other social critics—Morris to Marx, Geddes to Comte and Darwin, Hobson to economists old and new. Consequently they have a balance and a fullness in their social criticism which Ruskin often lacks. Avoiding Ruskin's shortcomings, they attract readers whom Ruskin repels; and through them Ruskin's ideas achieve wider currency among social critics and pass into the thought of the twentieth century.

That blending of other forces with his helped to maintain the vitality of Ruskin's ideas and to widen the application of them. The writings of Morris, Geddes, Hobson illustrate how Ruskin's ideas were selected from, were modified, and were amplified toward the turn of the century. All three of these men—even Hobson, whose chief debt is to Ruskin's economics—follow Ruskin in his application of aesthetic principles to reform.

¹ Hobson, *Confessions* (New York, 1938).

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FROM the early fifties, when he read aloud to Burne-Jones and others of his friends at Oxford from *The Stones of Venice*, until he made his last pronouncements upon Socialism, Morris bore warm testimony to the value of Ruskin's writings—to the Victorian age and to himself. In "How I Became a Socialist," written for *Justice* in 1894, Morris, speaking of mid-Victorian England, writes:

Lastly, there were a few who were in open rebellion against the said Whiggery—a few, say two, Carlyle and Ruskin. The latter, before my days of practical Socialism, was my master towards the ideal aforesaid,² and, looking backward, I cannot help saying, by the way, how deadly dull the world would have been twenty years ago but for Ruskin! It was through him that I learned to give form to my discontent, which I must say was not by any means vague. Apart from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilization.³

Often, moreover, Morris defines the segments of his thought for which or in which he is indebted to Ruskin. When R. M. Stevenson referred slightly to Ruskin's work at an Art Congress in Edinburgh, Morris made no mincing defense: "That's all nonsense! Why, man, Ruskin has made Art possible for us!"⁴ And in his lectures on art, such praise as this recurs: "It would be ungracious indeed for me who have been so much taught by him that I cannot help feeling continually as I speak that I am echoing his words, to leave out the name of John Ruskin from an account of what has happened since the tide, as we hope, began to turn in the direction of art."⁵ In particular, Morris found in Ruskin the meaning of medieval art: "By a marvellous inspiration of genius (I can call it nothing else) he attained at one leap to a true conception of mediaeval art which years of minute study had not gained for others."⁶ Ruskin had found that art was the expression of the society which produced it; and he had found the source of greatness in

² The ideal of a socialistic society; Morris does not enter "practical" Socialism till after 1880.

³ "How I Became a Socialist," in *Collected Works*, ed. May Morris, 24 vols. (London 1910-15), xxiii, 279. All future references to the works of Morris will be, unless otherwise specified, to this edition. Each volume will be identified in the edition by a number in parenthesis after the title.

⁴ Arthur Compton-Rickett, *William Morris, a Study in Personality* (London, 1913), p. 52.

⁵ *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), pp. 56 f.

⁶ "The Revival of Architecture" (xxii), p. 323.

medieval art—that the social life of the Middle Ages allowed the workman freedom of individual expression.⁷ In this latter discovery was the basis, Morris declares, of his own chief accusation against modern society: the impossibility of pleasurable work.⁸ With Ruskin himself in the chair, as Morris lectured at Oxford, Morris declared his doctrine and the source of it:

ART IS MAN'S EXPRESSION OF HIS JOY IN LABOUR. If those are not Professor Ruskin's words, they embody at least his teaching on the subject. Nor has any truth more important ever been stated; for if pleasure in labour be generally possible, what a strange folly it must be for men to consent to labour without pleasure; and what a hideous injustice it must be for society to compel most men to labour without pleasure.⁹

This tonic theme of Morris, in both art and social criticism, he learned from *The Stones of Venice*, from the chapter in it "The Nature of Gothic," which he called, as he published it separately at the Kelmscott Press in 1892, "one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century."¹ Here is a final tribute:

John Ruskin the critic of art has not only given the keenest pleasure to thousands of his readers by his lifelike descriptions, and the ingenuity and delicacy of his analysis of works of art, but he has let a flood of daylight into the cloud of sham-technical twaddle which was once the whole substance of "art-criticism," and still is its staple, and that is much. But it is far more that John Ruskin the teacher of morals and politics (I do not use the word in the newspaper sense), has done serious and solid work towards that new-birth of Society, without which genuine art, the expression of man's pleasure in his handiwork, must inevitably cease altogether, and with it the hopes of the happiness of mankind.²

Ruskin has supplied, it is evident, some of the fundamentals in Morris's conceptions of art, of contemporary society, and of ideal life. This relationship of Morris's thought to Ruskin's has been regularly recognized by his biographers and by the critics of his work, and some of these many writers have been detailed in the comparisons they make,

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ "Art under Plutocracy" (xxii), p. 173.

⁹ *Ibid.*; cf. *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), pp. 5, 139 f.

¹ "Preface to *The Nature of Gothic*, by John Ruskin," in *William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist*, ed. May Morris, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1936), i, 292. This preface is printed also in *The Works of Ruskin*, ed. Cook and Wedderburn (*The Library Edition*), x, 460 ff.

² *Ibid.*, p. 295.

and in the ascriptions.³ Critics of Ruskin also speak of Morris's discipleship, though more briefly.⁴ Both groups stress Morris's acceptance of some of Ruskin's ideas on art and on social reform. Thus Gustav Fritzsche, delimiting four stages of Morris's work—a state of purely artistic writing, a stage of social reform, a socialistic stage, and a communistic—devotes attention to Ruskin in the first two.⁵ There is, Fritzsche asserts, close articulation among these various stages (indeed it may be said against Fritzsche that demarcation of the third from the fourth is highly disputable); and probably he takes for granted the continuance into the later stages of doctrines developed earlier. Nevertheless it is true that none of the most extended criticisms of Morris's Socialism—in addition to Fritzsche's, those of Mrs. Helmholtz-Phelan and of Édouard Guyot—lays stress upon this fact: that the humanistic ideal of Morris's Socialism, that aspect of his doctrine which is one of its distinctive features, is a Ruskinian ideal. Many elements, for instance, in *News from Nowhere* which contrast most clearly with the materialistic Utopia of Edward Bellamy⁶—beauty, art, work, opposition to mechanics—these elements came largely from Ruskin. In the means to the new state, revolution and Socialism—there, however, Morris moves at right angles to Ruskin; and in Morris's desire for equality and freedom as well as for brotherhood, he and Ruskin are again in flat opposition. How Morris, having accepted Socialism (and indeed Marxism) in the early eighties, nevertheless retained in his social ideals various esthetic and humanistic principles which he learned from Ruskin, needs to be elucidated.

Morris's thought upon sociological aesthetics is largely a reflection of Ruskin's; but he makes fresh application of Ruskin's principles. He uses Ruskin's doctrine that art is a reflection of the society which produces it as an argument against restoration of ancient buildings—one of the topics which led him into public lecturing and ultimately into

³ See especially, among the biographers: J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, 2 vols. (London, 1899), *passim*, and Compton-Rickett, *William Morris*, pp. 247-57; among the critics of Morris as artist and art-theorist, Aymer Vallance, *William Morris: His Art, His Writings and His Public Life* (London, 1897), *passim*, and among the critics of Morris as reformer, Gustav Fritzsche, *William Morris's Sozialismus und Anarchistischer Kommunismus, Darstellung des Systems und Untersuchung der Quellen*, "Kolner Anglistische Arbeiten" (Leipzig, 1927), pp. 13 ff.; Anna A. Helmholtz-Phelan, *The Social Philosophy of William Morris* (Durham, North Carolina, 1927), *passim*; and Édouard Guyot, *Le socialisme et l'évolution de l'Angleterre contemporaine, 1880-1913* (Paris, 1913), pp. 379 ff.

⁴ See Hobson, *John Ruskin*, pp. 326 ff.; and Frederick William Roe, *The Social Philosophy of Carlyle and Ruskin* (New York, 1921), pp. 310 ff.

⁵ Fritzsche, *William Morris's Sozialismus*, pp. 9 ff.

⁶ See below, p. 225.

Socialism. Ancient buildings, both works of art and monuments of history, cannot be replaced by imitative art, which will only destroy them both as art and as history.⁷ It would be absurd to suppose that Greek workmen could have erected Gothic buildings; it is just as absurd to expect much of Victorian Gothic; Victorian imitations are a "trick of masquerading in other men's cast-off clothes."⁸ In 1893 Morris made a particularly vigorous plea to save the interior of Westminster Abbey from the restoration which had already spoiled the outside of the building, and in doing so he made one of the most vivid statements of his point of view:

Rewrite the lost trilogies of Aeschylus, put a beginning and end to the "Fight at Finsbury," finish the Squire's Tale for Chaucer, even if you cannot
 "call him up who left half-told"
 The story of Cambuscan bold,"

and if you can succeed in that, you may then "restore" Westminster Abbey.⁹

Morris gives more attention to the decorative arts than Ruskin did. The decorative arts provide two pleasures—pleasure in use, pleasure in manufacture. Once all handicraftsmen were artists; and "everything which was made by man's hands was more or less beautiful." Contemporary museums justify this statement, for the "Common household goods" of past times "form the bulk of the objects that fill our museums." And students are sent to them, "the mere wreckage of a bygone art," for models, and not to the best work of Victorian artists. What of the Victorian decorative arts? "Well, need one ask what sort of a figure the wreckage of our ornamental art would cut in a museum of the twenty-fourth century?"¹ Both by theory and example Morris gave impulse to a whole movement in the decorative arts, best represented by the work of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and by the writings of Walter Crane.² Through this movement many of Ruskin's ideas received wider circulation.

The pitiful results of Victorian so-called "manufacture" were only one aspect of the "inevitable ugliness" of "civilization as it now is." That ugliness is for Morris a central point of attack upon the society he

⁷ *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), p. 69; cf. also *ibid.*, p. 19; "The History of Pattern-Designing," (xxii), p. 234; "Architecture and History" (xxii), p. 320.

⁸ "Architecture and History" (xxii), pp. 314 f.

⁹ "Westminster Abbey" (xxii), pp. 418 f.

¹ *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), pp. 5, 9; "Art, Wealth, and Riches" (xxiii), p. 145; "Art and the Beauty of the Earth" (xxii), p. 162; "Art, Wealth, and Riches" (xxiii), p. 145.

² See Needham, pp. 184 ff.

lived in, as it was with Ruskin. The earth, Morris finds, is "growing uglier day by day, and there the swiftest where civilization is the mightiest." Ugliness of wares, the smoke nuisance, the litter of sandwich-papers in the country, "the increasing hideousness of the posters with which all our towns are daubed"³—all life is infected. Here is one of Morris's most forceful statements:

Not only are London and our other great commercial cities mere masses of sordidness, filth, and squalor, embroidered with patches of pompous and vulgar hideousness, no less revolting to the eye and the mind when one knows what it means: not only have whole counties of England, and the heavens that hang over them, disappeared beneath a crust of unutterable grime, but the disease, which to a visitor coming from the times of art, reason, and order, would seem to be a love of dirt and ugliness for its own sake, spreads all over the country, and every little market-town seizes the opportunity to imitate, as far as it can, the majesty of the hell of London and Manchester.⁴

Even the rich, he recalls in *News from Nowhere*, lived among sights and sounds and smells abhorrent—in, for example, the "brick-and-mortar county of London," "the spreading sore of London." The contemporary workman is "lodged in a sweltering dog-hole, with miles and miles of similar dog-holes between him and the fair fields of the country, which in grim mockery is called 'his.' Sometimes on holidays, bundled out by train to have a look at it, to be bundled into his grimy hell again in the evening. Poor wretch!" Against Victorian houses Morris's attack is especially vehement, against "those strange dwellings—the basest, ugliest, and the most inconvenient that men have ever built for themselves, and which our own haste, necessity, and stupidity compel almost all of us to live in." The rich, the middle-class in their "jerry-built houses of our suburbs,"⁵ and the poor—all of them live ignobly: "if you could clear your eyes from habitual blindness you would have to confess that there is no crime against art, no ugliness, no vulgarity which is not shared with perfect fairness and equality between the modern hovels of Bethnal Green and the modern palaces of the West End."⁶ Such condemnation, expressed often in Morris's most

³ *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), pp. 122, 125, 71 f.

⁴ "Art under Plutocracy" (xxiii), p. 170.

⁵ *News from Nowhere* (xvi), p. 94; "Address to Birmingham Students" (xxii), p. 423; "Art and Socialism" (xxiii), p. 207; "Architecture and History" (xxii), p. 313; *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), p. 83; "Revival of Architecture" (xxii), p. 329.

⁶ *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), p. 124.

striking concreteness, was one stimulus to the housing movements at the end of the century.

Even so, this ugliness was a symbol of deeper evils—of slavish, fearful lives for the workers, of empty, unwholesome lives for the rich: unhappiness and degradation. "I am not pleading," Morris writes, "for the production of a little more beauty in the world, much as I love it, and much as I would sacrifice for its sake; it is the lives of human beings that I am pleading for." These are his "claims for decent life": "First, a healthy body; second, an active mind in sympathy with the past, the present, and the future; thirdly, occupation fit for a healthy body and an active mind; and fourthly, a beautiful world to live in."⁷ These claims Victorian society denied; the attainment of them was the object of Morris's reforms. G. D. H. Cole makes this compact and significant summary:

From the first he wanted two things above all, and saw in these two things the keys to the regeneration of the life of Society. He wanted to surround ordinary men with beauty instead of ugliness, to ensure them pleasure and satisfaction in the common objects of daily use and enjoyment—in the face of the land, in the dwellings upon it, and in the utensils and amenities of everyday living. And he wanted no less that men should find pleasure and satisfaction in their daily work, that labour should cease to be an irksome imposition, and should become for most men, as it was for him, a natural and necessary means of self-expression.⁸

Beauty of environment, pleasure in work—Morris adopts both aims from Ruskin. As Ruskin went beyond Carlyle in adding pleasure to the value of work, so Morris, building upon Ruskin's foundation, stresses that pleasure, analyzes the elements of it, and examines the reasons for the loss of it in Victorian England.⁹

Without pleasurable work, "the surest and most constant of pleasures, the unfailing solace of misfortune, happy and honourable work," "the kindest and best gift that the world has ever had," happiness is impossible for men.¹ In his most fully developed discussion of the topic of work: "Useful Work *versus* Useless Toil,"² Morris finds in pleasure

⁷ *Signs of Change* (xxiii), p. 10; "Art and Its Producers" (xxii), p. 352; *Signs of Change* (xxiii), p. 25.

⁸ G. D. H. Cole, "William Morris," *Revaluations*, by Lancelles Abercrombie *et al.* (London, 1931), p. 140.

⁹ See Fritzsche, *William Morris's Sozialismus*, pp. 11 ff.; and J. Bruce Glasier, *William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement* (London, 1921), pp. 142 ff.

¹ "Art, Wealth, and Riches" (xxiii), p. 152; "Art and the Beauty of the Earth" (xxii), p. 165; see *News from Nowhere* (xvi), p. 92, and *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), p. 139.

² *Signs of Change* (xxiii), pp. 98 ff.

Nature's compensation for compulsion to labor; in labor just as in other matters "she takes care to make the acts necessary to the continuance of life in the individual and the race not only endurable, but even pleasurable."³ And if that pleasure is lost: "I say that if the workmen lack any part of it, they will be so far degraded, but that if they lack it altogether they are, so far as their work goes, I will not say slaves, the word would not be strong enough, but machines more or less conscious of their own unhappiness."⁴ Perhaps the leading function of art is to provide such pleasure.⁵ Popular art, indeed, means the end of dull work; with its revival there would no longer be excuse to talk of the curse of labor. In *News from Nowhere* Morris's attitudes are exemplified: "'Fancy people not liking to work!' Dick Hammond exclaims: 'It's too ridiculous.'" Though there is even a fear that some day may come a scarcity of work, this is unfounded; there is no real danger of a work-famine, for art and science are inexhaustible. What is the incentive to work among the Utopians?

"No reward of labour?" said Hammond gravely. "The reward of labour is *life*. Is that not enough?"⁶

For especially good work, there is plenty of reward—the reward of creation. Elsewhere Morris makes the same point—men of special talents need not be bribed to exercise them;⁷ "the only reward that you *can* give the excellent workman is opportunity for developing and exercising his excellent capacity."⁸ Finally, Morris declares, it is "the chief duty of the civilized world today . . . to set about making labour happy for all, to do its utmost to minimize the amount of unhappy labour. . . . When a new order of things has been achieved, where shall we turn for happiness except to daily labour?" What, then, of reduction of hours?

Shall all we can do with it be to shorten the hours of that toil to the utmost, that the hours of leisure may be long beyond what men used to hope for? and what then shall we do with the leisure, if we say that all toil is irksome? Shall we sleep it all away?—Yes, and never wake up again, I should hope, in that case.⁹

³ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁴ "Art under Plutocracy" (xxiii), p. 175; see *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), p. 43.

⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 5, 42.

⁶ *News from Nowhere* (xvi), pp. 40, 91, 92, 98.

⁷ "Architecture and History" (xxii), p. 307.

⁸ *Signs of Change* (xxiii), p. 137.

⁹ *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), pp. 33, 43.

Morris does more than emphasize with Ruskin pleasure in labor; he searches for the elements of it. They are chiefly three—"variety, hope of creation, and the self-respect which comes of a sense of usefulness; to which must be added that mysterious bodily pleasure which goes with the deft exercise of the bodily powers."¹ Creative work brings bodily pleasure and more:

I think that to all living things there is a pleasure in the exercise of their energies, and that even beasts rejoice in being lithe and swift and strong. But a man at work, making something which he feels will exist because he is working at it and wills it, is exercising the energies of his mind and soul as well as of his body.²

Variety of work, hope of leisure—these also are needed. For the pain, present to some degree in all labor, the compensation is rest; moreover, "it is necessary, unless workmen of all grades are to be permanently degraded into machines, that the hand should rest the mind as well as the mind and the hand."³ Work should be neither overanxious nor overwearisome. Nor should one other element be neglected—the pleasant surroundings in which the work should be done.⁴

Morris follows Ruskin in opposing mechanical work. The difference between intelligent work and mechanical work is "the difference between light and darkness."⁵ Such work is the result of the division of labor, growing since the time of the Reformation and almost complete by the middle of the eighteenth century;⁶ the workman becomes "the perfect machine which it is his ultimate duty to become."⁷ It needs to be said, however, that Morris would not abolish the factory system in the new order, since there are some tasks men may best, and cheerfully, perform in groups; but he advocates extreme restriction. Another type of work Morris opposes, work with machinery, for such work completes the degradation of the workman.⁸ Himself reduced to a machine in the eighteenth century, he has become "a slave to a machine." Morris refuses the term "labor-saving" machinery; for it did not spare the workman (Morris quotes Mill, to agree with him); thus "the phrase labour-

¹ "Art and Plutocracy" (xxiii), p. 174.

² *Signs of Change* (xxiii), p. 100.

³ "Art and the Beauty of the Earth" (xxii), p. 164.

⁴ *Signs of Change* (xxiii), p. 21.

⁵ *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), p. 146.

⁶ "Architecture and History" (xxii), pp. 309 ff.

⁷ *Signs of Change* (xxiii), p. 68.

⁸ See Cole, "William Morris," *Revaluations*, pp. 13 ff., for a penetrating discussion of this topic.

saving machinery is elliptical, and means machinery which saves the cost of labour, not the labour itself, which will be expended when saved on tending other machines."⁹ Again Morris would restrict but not abolish a type of work; the use of machinery that he approves is much wider than what Ruskin accepts. "Under a happier state of things [machines] would be used simply for saving labour."¹ Indeed, in *News from Nowhere*, machinery is perfected, machinery and its use as well: "All work which would be irksome to do by hand is done by immensely improved machinery; and in all work which it is a pleasure to do by hand machinery is done without."²

Unvaried, uncreative, mechanical work has taken away happiness from men; that fact is so important to Morris that he can declare: In spite of the great gains Europe has achieved since the end of the Middle Ages—" . . . freedom of thought, increase of knowledge, and huge talent for dealing with the material forces of nature; comparative political freedom withal and respect for the lives of civilized men, and other gains that go with these things: nevertheless I say deliberately that if the present state of society is to endure, she has bought these gains at too high a price in the loss of the pleasure in daily work which once did certainly solace the mass of men for their fears and oppressions."³ And as he views Victorian England, he finds there an "enormous amount of pleasureless work—work that tires every muscle of the body and every atom of the brain, and which is done without pleasure and without aim."⁴ Division of labor, mechanized industry—these are essential to the commercial organization of England; variety, creative work, even pleasant surroundings—none of these does the system permit.⁵

As he proposes his alternative, communistic socialism, Morris makes use of ideas from Fourier, from Marx, from Ruskin. Though Morris recognizes the reasonableness of the question: What will life be like after a socialist revolution? he acknowledges too the difficulty of answering: "When I try to picture the forms which that life will take, I confess I am at fault, and I think we must all be so."⁶ *News from Nowhere*, as its subtitle *A Utopian Romance* indicates, cannot be used as a literal expression of Morris's vision of the future society; it does, how-

⁹ "Architecture and History" (xxii), p. 311; "Art under Plutocracy" (xxiii), p. 180.

¹ *Signs of Change* (xxiii), p. 19.

² *News from Nowhere* (xvi), p. 97.

³ "Art and Socialism" (xxiii), p. 203.

⁴ *Hopes and Fears for Art* (xxii), p. 44.

⁵ "Art and the Beauty of the Earth" (xxii), p. 164.

⁶ *Commonweal* (1889), in *William Morris*, ed. May Morris, ii, 313.

ever, display Morris's attitudes and his social ideals, particularly if contrasted with Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*.

Bellamy's civilization remains a business civilization, reflecting the temperament of the author. Here is Morris's opinion of both:

. . . and of course his temperament may be called the unmixed modern one, unhistoric and unartistic: it makes its owner (if a Socialist) perfectly satisfied with modern civilization, if only the injustice, misery, and waste of class society could be got rid of; which half-change seems possible to him. The only ideal of life which such a man can see is that of the industrious *professional* middle-class men of to-day purified from their crime of complicity with the monopolist class, and become independent instead of being, as they now are, parasitical. . . . There are clear signs to show us that that very group whose life is thus put forward as an ideal for the future are condemning it in the present.⁷

Bellamy, Morris declares, "has his mind fixed on the mere machinery of life." And Bellamy's stress upon machinery in its narrower, literal sense Morris condemns. Of such mechanization Morris says: "it is not to be wondered at then that his only idea of making labour tolerable is to decrease the amount of it by means of fresh and ever fresh developments of machinery."⁸ A "middle-class" society, mechanized and apparently, in spite of disclaimers, standardized: a highly efficient utilitarian Utopia—this was apparently Bellamy's ideal.

Variety and beauty become characterizing qualities of the England of *News from Nowhere*; they give richness to the book. Much of its charm lies in its setting—the brighter London, where gardens supplant slums; the pure-flowing Thames; and the old Kelmscott found again in a world with which it is now in concord—and in the diversity and beauty of characters, costumes, everyday wares.⁹ Mechanization has no place in Morris's Utopia; and the setting is rustic, even in London, where an apricot orchard succeeds Trafalgar Square. There is variety of character and of interests—for Morris there would be no state-paid singers broadcasting by radio,¹ but spontaneous choruses. The art which is mentioned incidentally as an ornament of public buildings in *Looking Backward* has become a way of life in *News from Nowhere*.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 502 f.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 503, 505.

⁹ See Oliver Elton, *Survey of English Literature, 1780-1880*, 4 vols. (New York, 1920), iv, 31 f.: "He is the sanest of all the English writers who have imagined an ideal state of things. . . . His new earth is not an abstraction"; and Paul Bloomfield, *William Morris* (London, 1934), pp. 282 ff.

¹ See Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward* (New York, 1927), p. III.

The Victorian guest first sees the results in the Hammersmith guest house, the lead roof above the red brick walls, the traceried windows, the frieze "designed with a directness and force which I had never noticed in modern work before." Art is a delight to the age; leisure is filled with color. The Revolution arrived, old Hammond says, "to make people happy." (Indeed happiness is the only preventive of counter-revolution.) And happiness has been achieved: "we pass our lives in reasonable strife with nature, exercising not one side of ourselves only, but all sides, taking the keenest pleasure in all the life of the world."² Fullness of life, with beauty an important feature of it, this has been achieved. Happy work becomes an important feature of Morris's *Utopia*—much of it creative, little of it mechanical, some of the heaviest labor undertaken as a lark by young men (dressed as if for a boating party at Oxford); and for every man there is variety to give stimulus to his work.

With these ideas Morris carries Ruskin's social aesthetics into British Socialism. That they are among the distinctive features of that Socialism has been frequently attested. Bruce Glasier—a partial witness, it is true—has this to say of Morris's Socialism and of the Socialist League: "The influence of its early teaching, its high idealism, its communistic aim, its conception of fellowship as the basic principle of Socialism, and its emphasis on, not merely the political and economic claims of Labour, but the necessity of art and pleasure in work as a means of joy in life—these ideas, which were the staple of Morris's teaching, and infused by the League into the early movement, have remained germinal in its propaganda, and have helped to give British Socialism its distinctive character."³ Among personal tributes is this of Shaw: "It is true that there was no lack of practised and even powerful speakers in the movement, spouting Marxianism, Fabianism, and all the other brands, but not one of them could propagate [Morris's] vision of the life to come on a happy earth, and his values that went so much deeper into eternity than the surplus value of Marx."⁴ Finally G. D. H. Cole speaks:

News from Nowhere made me a Socialist; and I have never had cause to regret either the fact or the manner of the conversion. For I am sure that, in this part of his vision, William Morris had firm hold on the most abid-

² *News from Nowhere* (xvi), pp. 13, 58, 92.

³ Glasier, *William Morris*, p. 17.

⁴ George Bernard Shaw, *William Morris as I Knew Him* (New York, 1936), p. 50. This essay is also published as an introduction to *William Morris*, ed. May Morris, ii, ix ff.

ing secret of personal happiness and social well-being—that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a people unhappy in its labour to enter into the earthly paradise. The truth remains with me—as firm a possession now as it has been ever since that far-off first reading of *News from Nowhere*. It has guided me in shaping my own life (and I have been lucky in the chance to shape it to the doing of work in which I can find satisfaction); and it has guided me no less in seeking to influence the shaping of the life of Society.⁵

Through such men as these—and through the whole group of Guild Socialists⁶—Morris's ideas have been carried deep into the twentieth century—Morris's ideas, and with them John Ruskin's.

VI

THE varied activities of Patrick Geddes have been up to the present time merely suggested;⁷ no comprehensive biography has yet appeared, though Geddes died in 1932; indeed, until the spring of 1936 no full bibliography of published writings and no list of unpublished writings had been made.⁸ To do more than sketch the manifold interests—and accomplishments—of Patrick Geddes is unnecessary here; the variety of both substantiates the title American newspapers gave him: "a modern Leonardo."⁹ Lewis Mumford recounts some of his work:¹ Eminent as a biologist, he wrote also on economics; as a sociologist, he was one of the principal founders of the Sociological Society of Great Britain; as a geographer, he was head of the Cities Movement in Great Britain, and his survey of Edinburgh helped to initiate the survey movement in England. He made town plans for fifty cities in India and Palestine, and planned also the Universities of Jerusalem and of Hyderabad. Moreover, he "anticipated Ostwald and Frederick Soddy in applying the concepts of energy to the social sciences." Yet, Mumford goes on, "it is as a vigorous systematic thinker . . . that Geddes will perhaps best be known one day."² And even this account omits a field

⁵ Cole, "William Morris," *Revaluations*, p. 133.

⁶ See A. J. Penty, *Restoration of the Gild System* (1906); also Roe, *Social Philosophy of Carlyle and Ruskin*, pp. 320 ff.

⁷ See "A Sheaf of Tributes to the Late Sir Patrick Geddes," *Sociological Review*, xxiv (1932), 349 f.; also Lewis Mumford, "Who is Patrick Geddes?" *Survey*, liii (1925), 522 ff.; also P. L. Boardman, "Scottish Biologist, City-Planner and Sociologist," *Commonweal*, xxi (1935), 729 ff.

⁸ P. L. Boardman, *Esquisse de l'oeuvre éducative de Patrick Geddes* (Montpelier, 1936), pp. 169 ff.

⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 157; also "Neighbors," *Survey*, l (1923), 44.

¹ Mumford, "Who is Patrick Geddes?" *Survey*, *loc. cit.*

² Lewis Mumford, "Who is Patrick Geddes?" *Survey*, *loc. cit.*

to which Geddes gave consistent attention—education. Perhaps, indeed, this diffusion of thought has been responsible for the slowness of the recognition of Geddes; his books are not convenient texts for restricted fields. Yet the admiration of his associates and disciples attests to the merit of his work—of associates such as Elisée Reclus, Gilbert Slater, Victor Branford, J. A. Hobson, and William James;³ of disciples—Sir J. Arthur Thomson and Lewis Mumford. The tributes written at the time of his death came chiefly from Scotland and England, but there was praise from America as well, and from India and Palestine. And in the recent campaign to keep his sociological laboratory open, the committee included Shaw, Bergson, and Sir Raymond Unwin.⁴

Patrick Geddes drew from many sources for the ideas which he promulgated and which he exemplified in his activities; he achieves a synthesis of much of the most significant Victorian thought: the evolutionary theories sponsored by Darwin and Huxley; the sociology of Comte and Le Play; the vitalism of Bergson; ideas upon education, economics, art, city-planning. Those ideas formed the web of his mind; they gave new color and emphasis to one another. Among them John Ruskin's ideas furnished important strands and many parts of the pattern.

It is to Geddes himself that one turns for preliminary understanding of his debt to Ruskin. A glance through the titles of his early books and articles would alone furnish a clue: Before he wrote his brochure, *John Ruskin, Economist*,⁵ the young biologist had already written for the Royal Society of Edinburgh two essays on economics: "On the Classification of Statistics and Its Results,"⁶ and "An Analysis of the Principles of Economics."⁷ Shortly afterward he lectured: "On the Conditions of Progress of the Capitalist and of the Labourer."⁸ In 1888 the young biologist wrote on the fine arts, *Every Man His Own Art Critic*,⁹ and in the following year published again an essay on Ruskin, "Political Economy and Fine Art."¹ Ten years later he considered his *John Ruskin, Economist* valuable enough to allow it to be reprinted without significant revision.²

³ P. L. Boardman, *Esquisse de l'oeuvre éducatrice de Patrick Geddes*, pp. 54, 156.

⁴ Lewis Mumford, "Memorial to a Great Town Planner," *American City*, ii (1936), p. 101.

⁵ *John Ruskin, Economist* (Edinburgh, 1884).

⁶ *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, xi (1882), 295-322.

⁷ *Ibid.*, xii (1884), 942-980.

⁸ In *The Claims of Labour*, ed. James Oliphant (Edinburgh, 1886).

⁹ *Every Man His Own Art Critic*, Glasgow Exhibition, 1888 (Edinburgh, 1888).

¹ *The Scottish Art Review*, ii (1889), 13 f.

² *International Monthly*, i (1900), 280-308.

Geddes would not allow himself to be pigeon-holed:

People ask me, am I a Darwinian or a Spencerian, a Ruskinian, or a Carlylean, an Aristotelian or a Platonist? [And so on through a list of a dozen more labels.] And my answer is emphatically: "Yes, of course!" Every man who really and fairly thinks over all these doctrines must go so far with them, and see some truth in each.³

Elsewhere, however, he more definitely expresses the meaning of Ruskin to him and his sociology:

If you want immediate origins of our movement, you may say that the yeastive and generative spirit of Ruskin—with his critique of paleo-technic industry and its economists—had much to do with it.⁴ Then came Morris; then Ebenezer Howard and Unwin and the rest of us with Eutopia as garden city.⁵

And when one turns to the text of the writings of Geddes, one finds first the frequent quotations which show how regularly Ruskin comes to his mind. Most significantly, Geddes cites Ruskin in explanation of some of the most vital phases of his own work. It is finally in such correspondence that the illustration of the debt of Geddes to Ruskin's social criticism lies.

Geddes aligns himself with many of the Mid-Victorians and with many of his contemporaries in his constant attack upon the industrial age; the views the young Geddes adopted came from many sources. Yet since much of Geddes's writing was induced by his opposition to Victorian ideals, to national expansion careless of cultural values, to mechanistic approaches to human problems, one needs to note his early and continued advocacy of Ruskin's attitudes. Particularly his essay *John Ruskin, Economist* should be observed. In it Geddes warmly approves the humanistic, or "biotechnic" point of view—the application of the standard of vital value. He had already illustrated that point of view in his papers before the Royal Society of Edinburgh; he was to exemplify it throughout his long series of publications, to his last book, *Life: Principles of Biology*, in 1931. For his argument against materialism Geddes made use of materials with which Ruskin was unfamiliar, sometimes

³ Quoted by Amelia Defries, *The Interpreter Geddes* (London, 1927), p. 167.

⁴ *Paleotechnic*, like *paleolithic*, refers to a primitive, barbarous age—the age of wasteful and ugly industry.

⁵ Quoted by Defries, *The Interpreter Geddes*, p. 235. Geddes intends the pun in the word *Eutopia*.

obstinately unfamiliar—the evolutionary thought of Lamarck and Darwin, the sociological studies undertaken by Comte and Le Play. But many of Geddes's basic views of society too closely parallel Ruskin's to be chance correspondences. As Geddes tests Victorian society by the standard of vital value, his emphasis upon *aesthesis* is distinctively Ruskinian—upon beauty in environment, upon quality in production, and upon creative satisfaction in work. One can observe how Geddes as biologist and as sociologist adds to ideas which were essentially Ruskin's.

As he describes Victorian environment, Geddes remembers Ruskin. Ruskin, he says, "suffers from acute hyperaesthesia;" he "cannot be case-hardened to the sights and sounds and smells of mechanical civilisation." Again, though Ruskin "has been laughed at like the enraged musician in Hogarth's drawings; may we not for a while stand quiet to hear him play? What worker is so wholly dulled in vision as never to suffer from the noise and darkness of the towns? In Ruskin our sadness over the eclipse of beauty was deepened to maddening sorrow."⁶

In Geddes's writings description is more limited than in Ruskin's; but the attitudes of the two men are the same. *The Coming Polity*, on which Geddes collaborated with Victor Branford, affords this summary: "First came the Factory Age which moulded the towns into monotonous dreariness of mean streets; and next the Railway Age which distorted them into shapeless repulsive forms, disfiguring the countryside by luxuriant growth of monstrous tentacles."⁷ Geddes confines his remarks chiefly to the towns, and his work on housing and town-planning became the major activity of the second half of his life. Always, however, he considers the town in relation to its region, and deprecates, like Ruskin, the draining of the produce and talent of the countryside and the provinces into the cities, into the capital cities especially, which gave little in return and were themselves contemptible. "What has any modern industrial city," Geddes writes, "however stupendous its wealth—on paper—to show save a sorry aggregate of ill-constructed houses?"⁸ Many of his details he draws from London and Edinburgh. In London "the City" is "but an exaggeration of the old Ghetto."⁹ The buildings of commerce and finance dwarf the churches;

⁶ "John Ruskin, as Economist," *International Monthly*, i (1900), 293. This is a republication, without significant change, of the essay of 1884.

⁷ Victor Branford and Patrick Geddes, *The Coming Polity* (London, 1919), p. 167.

⁸ "John Ruskin, as Economist," *International Monthly*, i (1900), 304.

⁹ *Cities in Evolution* (London, 1915), p. 117.

there is no spot left from which to see Westminster at its best.¹ Slums are everywhere: "Slum, Semi-Slum, Super-Slum—the end of the evolution of cities. Here are the real wages which capitalist and laborer alike have earned." In spite of architectural qualities, even Charlotte Square in Edinburgh is a super-slum: "Skimpy back yards, spoiled garden spaces, mews—formerly disease breeders."² And more than one-half of the Scottish people live in one- and two-room tenements. "The poor quarter" and "the industrial quarters" cover three-fourths of the area of the industrial towns.³ Geddes is more practical than Ruskin, and more discreet. In recommendations for the city of Dunfermline, he speaks thus of factories: "My treatment of the mills below the abbey and palace will sufficiently show that, so far from having any objection to industrial buildings, I accept and even welcome their presence, and only press their employment in ways consistent with the ordinary claims of hygiene and public beauty." (Yet directly afterward Geddes is careful to point out "the danger of an industrial huddle of factories and buildings in the beautiful valley to the south.")⁴ Geddes praises Durham as "a veritable beauty-spot of the coal-age, a paragon of the paleotechnic order." Aware of paleotechnic virtues, Geddes writes his *Cities in Evolution* to demonstrate how limited in extent and possibility such virtues are, and to suggest immediate and gradual improvements.

Geddes calls upon science to help his analysis: "In matters civic," he says, "as in simpler fields of science, it is from facts surveyed and interpreted that we gain our general ideas of the direction of Evolution, and even see how to further this; since from the best growths selected we may rear yet better ones."⁵ Thus, though Geddes like Ruskin points out the comfort and beauty of medieval cities (Salisbury, for example, and Old Edinburgh), Geddes does more—he recounts the deterioration of the old cities, the gradual degradation of housing, particularly in the industrial period. Geddes traces also the growth of new "combinations," clusters of cities in Lancashire and across the south of Scotland. From such a background he can predict some of the dangers of the future—to the supply of water and food, to the countryside not yet covered; and he can emphasize the need of city-planning and the means to it. The artist and the evolutionist both look at the modern

¹ Branford and Geddes, *The Coming Polity*, p. 272.

² *Cities in Evolution*, pp. 118, 128.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 134.

⁴ *City Development* (Edinburgh, 1904), pp. 90, 95.

⁵ *Cities in Evolution*, p. vi.

city; Geddes uses Ruskin's term for it: Kakatopia, the evil place, the place of ugliness and disease. Ruskin attacks what he sees; Geddes explains historically and makes plans for the future.

Not only through general environment, but also through the labor it required, Victorian industry had its effect upon men. Rough work, mechanical work, useless work—all these are essentials of Victorian industry, and all cause the deterioration of the worker. The insistence of Ruskin "on the primary duty of regulating expenditure with reference to the effect on the mind and body of the labourer," Geddes points out in 1884. "Such teaching," he declares, "surely equals in clear biological insight and in social wisdom anything in the entire literature of practical economics; since it clearly indicates the line of evolution toward the future city of healthy and happy artists, surrounded by imperishable treasure, from our modern city of weary and sickly drudges, immersed in germs and dust for their pains."⁶ Thirty years later, Geddes is still calling attention to the problem Ruskin raised: "One of the worst limitations of the middle-class and upper-class points of view is . . . not seeing how widely different are the forms of labour—not merely in products and various rates of money wages; . . . beyond all these, their effects."⁷

Partly through their environment, partly through their work, and partly through its production of wares for profit and not for use, Victorian industry has robbed the people of fullness of life. "For both [rich and poor]," Geddes writes, "life is equally blank at present; the capitalist in his big ugly house is no happier than the labourer in his little ugly one; if the one has more fatigue, the other has more worry."⁸ He speaks of the new need for "change of air," and of the disadvantages of rapid travel. Like Ruskin, Geddes writes of the universal loss of taste, a concomitant of mass production—cheapness in dress, in houses, in amusement: "The taste of the European public is at present practically directed by women of the town," Ruskin writes;⁹ and Geddes: "The crude luxury is excused, nay psychologically demanded, by the starvation of paleotechnic life in well-nigh every vital element of beauty and spirituality known and valued by humanity hitherto."¹ Both cite the

⁶ John Ruskin, as Economist, *International Monthly*, i (1900), 304.

⁷ *Cities in Evolution*, p. 61.

⁸ "On the Conditions of Progress of the Capitalist and of the Labourer," *The Claims of Labour*, p. 107.

⁹ *Fors*, ii (xxvii), 359.

¹ *Cities in Evolution*, p. 76.

tremendous increase in drunkenness. In one passage of an Indian town-planning report Geddes points out many phases of the deterioration of paleotechnic life:

For the prevalent disease of modern times, and of India perhaps in particular, is not any one of the organic calamities, such as plague, malaria, etc., of recent sweeping visitations. . . . The essential evil lies in that lowering of nervous resistance and psychic vigour,—in short 'neurasthenia'—which leaves people a too easy prey to these specific diseases. It is the now common urban prevalence of depressed physical tone, and of lessened mental and moral energy together. Of these evils the symptoms are only too manifest in the modern city. Hence its diminished economic energy and efficiency. Hence also its lessened material constructiveness, with lowering and almost cessation of art-interest, and of art-production, together. The modern city, despite its apparent bustle of business and buzz of machinery, is thus sick, sick at heart. With its emotional life fading to apathy, religion loses its vital energy, and survives mainly as routine. With depressed interest in life and its higher issues intellect is dulled. . . . Imagination and the arts die down together; or are replaced by crude stimulants, dull comforts, or transient luxuries, in lower, middle and upper classes, respectively, or more or less together.²

Geddes accepted Ruskin's view of the results of Victorian industry, and tested those results by Ruskin's standard of vital value; clearer evidence of Geddes's indebtedness lies in his detailing of the ugliness of the Victorian environment, in his demand for quality in production, and in his stress upon the mechanical monotony of factory work. Furthermore, Geddes echoed many of Ruskin's specific indictments (so many that only his thorough absorption of Ruskin's attitudes can explain the correspondence). There is, however, this significant difference between the writings of the two men: One of Ruskin's chief powers is in attack, in the deep-etched portrayal of evils and in the acid intensity of many of his sentences. Geddes expresses his views more flatly. If Geddes gains a hearing, he will not offend with extravagance; though, on the other hand, he cannot excoriate or inspire. Geddes, moreover, fits his details into a clearer pattern than Ruskin's, avoiding the incoherence which made many of Ruskin's opinions seem adventitious and irrelevant. Thus the term that Geddes applies to the age, *paleotechnic*, relates it to the evolving technics of the human race, suggesting the Old Stone Age, its crudity and barbarism. As the neolithic age suc-

² *Town-Planning in Patiala State and City* (Lucknow, 1922), p. 23.

ceeded the paleolithic, so, Geddes predicts, will a *neotechnic* age succeed Victorian industrialism.³ Geddes saw the new age already appearing in Scandinavia (age of electricity, generated by water-power; of coöperation; of culture; the skill of the neotechnic order being "directed by life toward life, and for life"). To such a society the text "Whatsoever a man soweth—" will be preached as a blessing; to the *paleotechts* it is preached as a curse.⁴ Geddes by his new terms and by his more organic view of civilization adds fresh clarity to the Ruskinian ideas about the industrial age.

In the special field of art Geddes can add much less to Ruskin's criticism. That as a young scientist he should venture into art-criticism is indicative chiefly of one thing—the inspiration of the work he was simultaneously doing on Ruskin.⁵ His criticism is itself negligible, but it suggests the basis of the continuing stress Geddes put upon the fine arts in his other writing. The degradation of nineteenth-century art—which drew Ruskin more and more toward social criticism from the time of the *Stones of Venice*—Geddes also uses as an illustration of the deterioration of culture. He cites details from Ruskin—the billboards as "well-nigh our only source of street effect;" like Ruskin he scorns the academicians: shows are held chiefly "for the benefit of the forty richest of artists."⁶ Like Ruskin he finds architecture at its nadir, "vastness yet monotony of design, elaborate finish yet utter spiritlessness of detail."⁷ It is, however, in his work on evolution, on economics, and on city-planning that Geddes's insistence upon beauty, upon *aesthesis*, becomes notable. He asks:

Why should there be among living creatures such a practical omnipresence of pleasing lines and colours? Must not part of the answer be that natural creatures are [results of] harmonious metabolism and rhythmic orderly growth? Perfectly adaptive architecture from which all the useless has been eliminated, the organised ripple-marks of orderly regulated growth, the colour-expressions of successfully rhythmic metabolism from which everything disorderly has been sifted out, *ought* to be beautiful.⁸

³ *Cities in Evolution*, pp. 10-28.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 75.

⁵ 1887: "Every Man His Own Art Critic at the Manchester Exhibition;" *John Ruskin, Economist* (reprint), 1888; *Every Man His Own Art Critic* (Glasgow exhibition), 1889; "Political Economy and Fine Art," *The Scottish Art Review*, II, 13; chiefly about Ruskin.

⁶ "Political Economy and Fine Art," *The Scottish Art Review*, II, 13.

⁷ *Industrial Exhibitions and Modern Progress* (Edinburgh, 1887), p. 46.

⁸ Sir J. Arthur Thomson and Patrick Geddes, *Life: Outlines of General Biology*, 2 vols. (London, 1931), I, 37.

In this comment Geddes approaches from the standpoint of a biologist Ruskin's doctrine of "specific beauty." The optimism Geddes displays as he talks of evolution ("It is not merely that all things flow; it is that life flows uphill")⁹ is based partly on his belief in the increasing beauty of forms. And believing that both vitalistic and mechanistic interpretations of evolution are essential, for "fundamental though environment is, the progress of evolution is ever marked by active adaptation,"¹ Geddes comes to assert the great importance of the artist in the evolution of man. "The high and intensely positive pleasure-consciousness of the poets—surely the most vitally developed of our species, and most anticipatory of all—is not to be ignored by science; the more since what makes all the fine arts fine is their poetic quality, of which science and philosophy at their fullest, share something too."² Art—pictorial, architectural, poetic—is not to be regarded casually, as a philanthropic diversion of the rich; the sensitiveness of the artist is vital to the evolving consciousness of man. Though "beauty is a tonic, potent toward health,"³ art is more than a restorative; it is a stimulant—in, for example, presenting ideals which form character. How little beauty, how limited artistic stimulus Geddes, in common with Ruskin, thought "paleotechnic" life possessed, has already been detailed. In his city-planning projects—in Dunfermline, in Indore and Patiala, in Jerusalem—Geddes strove to overcome ugliness as well as squalor and crowding; and beauty he prophesied in the "neotechnic" age to come.

Blended with their adverse criticism of the Industrial Age, the positive beliefs of Ruskin and Geddes show clear, those beliefs which underlie the changes they advocate. In applying those beliefs, in motivating the changes, at times they work on similar projects, notably a reform of education. In certain of his reforms and constructive theories Geddes calls attention to anticipations in Ruskin, sometimes casually to defend Ruskin's practicality, as when Geddes points out Ruskin's clear-sightedness in urging state control of marriage; sometimes more emphatically, as in his reference to the slum-improvement Ruskin initiated in London. The "Tenement House Exhibit now being prepared in New York for Paris [1900] must also go straight back for its impetus to Ruskin's initial investment with Miss Octavia Hill."⁴ Geddes ac-

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

² *Ibid.*, ii, 1215.

³ *Ibid.*, 1211.

⁴ "John Ruskin, as Economist," *International Monthly*, i (1900), 304.

complished much in slum-clearance in Edinburgh. And Ruskin's attempt to revive handicrafts in St. George's Guild is followed by Geddes in his Dunfermline report. Except for such details and for educational methods, Ruskin's work in establishing St. George's Guild, important as it was in serving to exemplify his ideas, had few suggestions for Geddes's practice. The feudalistic system of land-holding, the banishment of steam-machinery—these favorite concerns of Ruskin's seemed to Geddes to be out of place in an evolving industrial world. Geddes looks forward in the town-planning which became his chief interest in the first decade of the twentieth century.

In his reports—Dunfermline, the cities of India, Jerusalem—one finds again his interest in art as well as in sanitation. Beauty and efficiency go together. "The cogent lesson for our own times is that Art and Industry, Education and Health, Morals and Business, so generally severed in the passing age, must henceforth advance in unison."⁵ Geddes contrasts the "later town-planning movement" with the earlier, in which grandiose conceptions overruled practical considerations; the rising rents after the slum-clearance in Paris in the middle of the nineteenth century were, he believes, an important cause of the Commune. The later movement, in which he himself played a considerable part, had two characteristics. First, it maintained "a larger view both of social and of individual life than as limited by its mechanical and monetary interests—especially as exaggerated, to the depression of others, by the recent phases of Western Civilization, its 'machine-economy' and 'price economy.' . . . It insists upon providing more and more fully for the completest possible improvement of the whole life-conditions of the community and its members." Secondly, the later town-planning movement "increasingly bases this more comprehensive procedure upon a correspondingly full and varied 'Survey.'"⁶ In the town-planning field Geddes reached high esteem, as his many appointments testify. He kept ideals and practice before him at the same time. And again Geddes makes use of details and ideas from John Ruskin.

VII

JOHN A. HOBSON had already gained distinction as an economist, a distinction somewhat grudgingly acknowledged by the orthodox, when he was led by chance to make a close study of Ruskin. Ruskin was not to him, as to Morris and to Geddes, an initial stimulus; though a contem-

⁵ Branford and Geddes, *The Coming Polity*, p. xi.

⁶ *Patiala*, p. 21.

porary of Geddes, he came to Ruskin later, in the mid-nineties. Yet even more clearly than Geddes, he adopted certain fundamentals of Ruskin's social criticism; and they in turn became central to his own economic teaching.

Like Morris, like Geddes, Hobson makes frequent acknowledgement of his indebtedness, which like theirs has been both general and detailed. Specific references throughout his major works are the tributes of a disciple to a master. Hobson's praise is generous, but it is not, from the first, indiscriminate. As Hobson has written, widely and variously, on economics, on politics, and in broader social criticism, adding often a volume a year, his advocacy of Ruskin's doctrines has been paralleled by continuing appraisal of them. *John Ruskin, Social Reformer*, the book which in 1898 summarized Hobson's study of Ruskin, remains the fullest and most authoritative treatment of its topic. Subsequent articles, notably the one written for the Ruskin Centenary,⁷ reveal modifications in Hobson's criticism of Ruskin; but they reveal also the unmodified acceptance by Hobson of many of Ruskin's principles. In his most recent book, *Confessions of an Economic Heretic*, Hobson speaks once more of the work he did on Ruskin in the nineties, declaring: "From him I drew the basic thought for my subsequent economic writings."⁸

Early and late, many of Hobson's interests have lain outside Ruskin's concerns. And both politically and economically Hobson's disagreements with Ruskin have been important in his thought and writing. Yet in the fundamental interest of his life, in his economics, in his criticism of the industrial society for which his economics is partly an explanation and against which partly a protest, and in his theories of social reform, Hobson has built with and often upon the ideas of Ruskin.

Among these ideas Ruskin's aesthetic judgments upon contemporary society are relatively unimportant; but Ruskin's analysis of work and his demand for qualitative judgment of production reappear—modified of course and much amplified—in Hobson.

Hobson predicts, in *John Ruskin, Social Reformer*, that Ruskin's "work will hereafter be recognized as the first serious attempt in England to establish a scientific basis of economic study from the social standpoint."⁹ But Ruskin does not, he declares, construct a fully de-

⁷ "Ruskin as Political Economist," *Ruskin the Prophet*, ed. J. H. Whitehouse, pp. 83 ff.

⁸ *Confessions of an Economic Heretic*, p. 42.

⁹ *John Ruskin*, p. 120.

veloped system. On the one hand, Ruskin has made a notable analysis of *value*. "Intrinsic value" is the capacity "to satisfy a good human want";¹ "effectual value" depends upon the ability of the consumer to utilize the intrinsic qualities of goods. An implicit corollary is a third test of wealth, the quantity of goods the consumer can use.² These distinctions, achieved in *Munera Pulveris*, were, however, but one of the announced aims of the book.³ There Hobson discovers "laid down with admirable succinctness the fundamental antithesis between the cost of labor which goes into making 'goods,' and the utility or enjoyment to be got out of them."⁴ But Ruskin ignores one side of the problem, consideration of *cost* as balanced against *value*. To the various aspects of cost—intrinsic nature of the work in relation to the capacity of the worker and the distribution of labor—Ruskin was, Hobson says, "fully alive." "But neither in 'Munera Pulveris' nor elsewhere has he gathered them together so as to confront them with his analysis of value or utility."⁵ Ruskin's analysis was therefore incomplete in a material respect.

The doctrines Hobson praises in Ruskin are incorporated in his own theories; the qualifications Hobson has made, even in considering the scope of political economy, are made again as he attacks the classicists and builds his own system. With much fuller knowledge than Ruskin, Hobson provides a more detailed refutation; and his construction has a balance that Ruskin lacks. In addition, Hobson devotes whole volumes and constant attention to narrowly economic questions which Ruskin barely touches upon or of which he is entirely unaware.

Hobson's major heresy remains nevertheless his continuation of Ruskin's assault upon classical political economy and his adoption and sponsorship, on the other hand, of Ruskin's definitions of *wealth* and *value*. Adumbrated in *John Ruskin, Social Reformer*, this heresy was published as early as 1902 in *The Social Problem*.⁶ For what is probably Hobson's best known and most influential book, *Work and Wealth* (1914),⁷ it furnishes the central theme, a theme repeated with

¹ Hobson's paraphrase, *ibid.*, p. 108.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 109 f.

³ *Munera Pulveris* (xvii), p. 152: "The essential work of the political economist is to determine what are in reality useful or life-giving things, and by what degrees and kinds of labor they are attainable and distributable."

⁴ Hobson, *John Ruskin*, p. 106.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁶ *The Social Problem* (London, 1902).

⁷ *Work and Wealth* (New York, 1914).

many variations in two of Hobson's most notable succeeding volumes, *Free-Thought in the Social Sciences* (1926)⁸ and *Wealth and Life* (1929, 1930).⁹ It is this heresy which furnishes Hobson with the term "welfare economics," a term generally adopted by both adherents and critics of his theories. Promulgation of this heresy, or, in other words, "the humanization of economic thinking," Hobson declares to be his "primary intellectual task."¹

To the simplified systems of other economists Hobson opposes his welfare economics. Proceeding from Ruskin's definitions of *wealth*, *value*, and *cost*, Hobson erects a balanced theory, elaborated most fully in his *Work and Wealth*. He attempts "a human valuation of industry [which] will give equal attention to Production and Consumption, will express Cost and Utility in terms of human effort and satisfaction, and will substitute for the monetary standard of wealth a standard of well-being." Such an attempt is not new, Hobson declares, for Ruskin had embarked upon it. Ruskin had "seized with incomparable force of vision the cardinal truth of human economics, *viz.*, that every piece of concrete wealth must be valued in terms of the vital costs of its production and the vital uses of its consumption, and his most effective assault upon current economic theory was based upon its complete inadequacy to afford such information." Yet Ruskin had failed to apply this double analysis: he had slighted the "costs" as he worked with "utility." Hobson announces thereupon that the purpose of his book "is in fact to perform the task indicated by Ruskin, *viz.*, to apply to industry the vital standard of valuation, or at any rate to improve the instruments of vital survey." Hobson takes "organic welfare" for his standard, "regarding the productive effort which goes into any work of production and the satisfaction which proceeds from the consumption of any product, not as a separate cost and a separate utility, but in their total bearing upon the life of the producer or consumer." Though he finds defects in the term *organic*, it comes closest to his meaning. "What is necessary," he says, "is that some term should be used to assist the mind in realising clearly that all life proceeds by the cooperation of units working, not each for its separate self, but for a whole, and attaining their separate well-being in the proper functioning of that whole." Moreover, Hobson

⁸ *Free-Thought in the Social Sciences* (New York, 1926).

⁹ *Wealth and Life* (London, 1930). The American edition of the preceding year has what is probably the less familiar title: *Economics and Ethics* (New York, 1929).

¹ *Confessions of an Economic Heretic*, p. 58.

means to consider economic processes "not only in their bearing upon individual lives, but also in their bearing upon the welfare of society."²

Here are the lines of Hobson's investigation, directly founded upon *Munera Pulveris*:

In order to express business 'costs' in terms of human cost, we require to know three things:

1. The quality and kind of various human efforts involved in the business 'cost.'

2. The capacities of the human beings who give out these efforts.

3. The distribution of the effort among those who give it out.

Corresponding strictly to this analysis of 'costs' of Production will be the analysis of 'utility' of Consumption. There we shall want to know:

1. The quality and kind of the satisfaction or utility yielded by the 'economic utility' that is sold to consumers.

2. The capacities of consumers who get this 'economic utility.'

3. The distribution of the economic utility among the consuming public.³

Hobson in this summary outlines the analysis which follows in his book. First he considers, much more fully than Ruskin, "The Human Costs of Labor," though here also he often follows Ruskin's clues. Thus Hobson emphasizes the costs of mechanical work, contrasting it with the creative. "As the artist presents the supreme example of creative work, with a minimum of human costs and a maximum of human utility, so the machine-tender presents the supreme example of imitative work, with a maximum of human costs and a minimum of human utility." Hobson points out the "burden of injurious fatigue which results from muscular or nervous overstrain, and from the other physical and moral injuries which are the natural accompaniments of this overstrain." He details also the risks, of accident and disease, in industry. Yet in spite of these tremendous human costs connected with it, he declares the charge against machinery to have been frequently overstated.⁴ He cannot agree with those who find (as Morris did, and Ruskin before him) ideal conditions of labor in the Middle Ages. Hobson's realistic point of view is worth detailing at length:

To those who brood upon these visions of the past, our modern industrial development has often seemed a crude substitution of quantity of goods for quality, the character of labor deteriorating in the process. With the element of truth in such a judgment is mingled much falsehood. There has

² *Work and Wealth*, pp. 9 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 63, 72.

never been an age or a country where the great bulk of labor was not toilsome, painful, monotonous, and uninteresting, often degrading in its conditions. Bad as things are, when regarded from the standpoint of a human ideal, they are better for the majority of workers in this and in other advanced industrial countries than ever in the past, so far as we can reconstruct and understand that past. Machinery has rendered a great human service by taking over large masses of heavy, dull, and degrading work. When fully developed and harnessed to the social service of man, it should prove to be the great liberator of his free productive tastes and faculties, performing for him the routine processes of industry so that he may have time and energy to devote himself to activities more interesting and varied.⁵

Hobson goes on to consider the distribution of human costs in labor, discussing the work of women and children and the various costs of various work for men. But like Ruskin Hobson devotes most of his analysis to the utilities of consumption, applying first the vital standard to various commodities and distinguishing between "wealth" and "illth."⁶ Again Hobson's analysis is much fuller than Ruskin's, as he considers "Class Standards of Consumption" and, more especially, "The Human Law of Distribution."⁷

It is difficult to distinguish at times between Hobson's description and his recommendations, between economic science and economic art. (For that shifting of focus he has had, of course, frequent precedent in economic writing.) Thus toward the end of *Work and Wealth* Hobson lays the foundations for reforms he advocates, dividing productive activities into Art and Routine,⁸ and pointing the way to social progress:

If, then, we are to secure an economy of social progress in which relatively less importance is to be given to those industries which are less humanly desirable, alike in the work they involve and in the satisfaction their products yield, we must have a society which becomes increasingly qualitative in its tastes and interest and in its human constitution. A larger proportion of its real income must take shape in non-material goods, or in material goods which depend more for the satisfaction they yield upon their quality. In a word, there must be a tendency to keep life simple in regard to material consumption.⁹

Hobson, like Morris and Geddes, disagrees with Ruskin upon gov-

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 106 ff.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 159 ff.

⁸ *Work and Wealth*, p. 304.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 315 f.

ernment. It is interesting to notice, however, that Hobson's semi-socialism grows directly from his desire to replace much quantitative, routine industry with qualitative, artistic craftsmanship. Though Hobson opposes State Socialism, his economic proposals are partially, though by no means completely, socialistic. A planned economy is needed; provision for that is the chief task of government.¹ Such planning demands, Hobson declares, "liquidation of private profiteering capitalism in many important branches of production, transport, commerce, and finance." Key industries should be socialized, the standardized, mechanical industries; but the higher kinds of work, these set a limit to Socialism. "Individuality in consumption requires some corresponding individuality in production." A balance is needed between individual and routine production, a balance based upon the likenesses and differences of men.² Here, finally, is Hobson's conception of an economic democracy: "I envisage an economic democracy in which the socialization of standardized and key industries, voluntary co-operative enterprise, and private business enterprise will perform different sorts of productive work, while the consumers' final interests and liberties must be secured through the ordinary forms of popular local elections, supplemented by participation in conciliation and arbitration boards dealing with specific industrial problems."³ In other words, the state will exert firm authority over the enterprises left to private business. The excess profits of skilled industries could, moreover, be taxed.⁴

Hobson's ideas of political and economic reform are multifarious. Many of them recall Ruskin. Yet the relationship need not be stressed. The political method Hobson urges is, furthermore, directly opposed to Ruskin's; and the close attention to social incentives and the concern with internationalism are Hobson's alone. But the economic theory which lies behind Hobson's ideas of reform gives them unity, the economic theory behind them and the ideals to which the reforms point. And both of these, it need hardly be repeated, are in significant ways accepted from Ruskin. "It is to improved quality and character of consumption," Hobson says, "that we can alone look for a guarantee of social progress."⁵ And again, "All progress, from primitive savagedom to modern civilization, will then appear as consisting in the progressive

¹ *Poverty and Plenty, the Ethics of Income* (London, 1931), pp. 87 f.

² *Confessions*, pp. 139, 144, 171 f., 197, 198; see also *Work and Wealth*, pp. 293, 304 ff.; and *Wealth and Life*, p. xxx.

³ *Confessions*, pp. 179 f.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁵ *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism* (London and New York, 1926), p. 424.

socialism of the lower functions, the stoppage of lower forms of competition, and of the education of the more brutal qualities, in order that a larger and larger proportion of individual activity may be engaged in the exercise of higher functions, the practice of competition upon higher planes, and the education of higher forms of fitness.”⁶ Life itself must become qualitative, Hobson declares, quoting Geddes in support.⁷ He might have added, as frequently he did, “There is no wealth but Life.”

VIII

NONE of these social critics—Morris, Geddes, Hobson—can be called a Ruskinian, if the term denotes a mere follower. They are individual in the phases of Ruskin’s social criticism which they select for their own attention, and consequently in the ideas of Ruskin which they promulgate; they are individual in what they renounce.

Yet common to the thought of all three men are their humanistic criticism of contemporary society and the humanistic aims they advance for reform. In the nature of this criticism and of these aims, as in many of the details of both, they work, as all of them declare, with Ruskin’s standards of vital value. They oppose the mechanism and materialism of the current industrial society with Ruskin’s “organic” ideal. They point to results of production for profit and demand concern for consumption. Vital, qualitative values in consumption—they sponsor these; and they require an accounting of vital costs. Hobson is less extreme than Morris as he considers the effects of mechanized industry upon labor, and he is less optimistic than Geddes of imminent improvement; yet Hobson as well as the others hopes for extension of creative work. And Hobson, like Morris and Geddes, gives close attention to qualities of products. He does not, however, afford, as they do, detailed description of the effects of contemporary civilization upon the environment and the lives of men. With Ruskin Hobson aims at a qualitative ideal of life; Geddes and Morris give more attention than he to the aesthetic poverty of their age, and especially to the ugliness of “paleotechnic” cities and to the barren, ugly lives of the citizens.

There are many and essential points of likeness among the three; there is much divergence also, in their interests and their attitudes, and in their use of Ruskin. Morris, for example, continues Ruskin’s theoriz-

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 420.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 433.

ing in sociological aesthetics. And in his Utopia he interweaves medievalism and his opposition to contemporary materialism with Marxian Socialism. Geddes examines the role of *aesthesis* in evolution, and finds in the neglect of it one of many instances of the unduly mechanical views and techniques of science. Into city-planning he carries Ruskinian ideals of beauty and humanity. Hobson, finally, makes use chiefly of Ruskin's economics. But as he propounds his semi-socialism, Hobson maintains his interest in qualitative consumption and in human costs—or, in other word, in vital *wealth*.

Into many fields, therefore, these three critics have carried Ruskin's aesthetic judgments of Victorian life—work and environment—and the social theories he based upon those judgments. To separate one interest of Ruskin's from the others—government, education, economics—is of course to do some violence to the reticulation of his thought, to that "organic" approach to human experience which Hobson praises in him. Yet only so can the acceptance of Ruskin's ideas be clearly illustrated.

It must be remarked that the social ideas of Ruskin are still current, still significant. Morris's social criticism has been reviewed frequently in the last few years. His humanistic Communism is considered an antidote to Marxian materialism by some writers who have little praise for the Soviet. Geddes wrote into the fourth decade of the present century, carrying into contemporary thought the standards and ideals he had accepted fifty years before; and through Lewis Mumford his humanism, as well as his study of city-planning and techniques, is gaining a greater currency than it ever had while he lived.⁸ The reviews of Hobson's recent autobiography are not mere tributes to a venerable figure of the past, for Hobson's ideas continue to be praised or attacked as noteworthy contemporary social criticism.

If for no other reason than this—that his social criticism has long maintained its vitality and its pertinence—Ruskin's thought cannot be dismissed as only the imaginative maundering of a man of letters. Ruskin was extravagant often, and often more dogmatic than reasonable; but as he turned his attention from art to society he saw clearly what other men had not seen, and he established a point of view and a group of doctrines which later social critics have continued to hold.

⁸ Mumford has remarked upon the identity of the fundamental social doctrines of Ruskin, Geddes, and himself: "As a social scientist, Ruskin dealt in realities, the realities of energy, the realities of cultural wealth, and not in pecuniary abstractions: he thus anticipates Geddes and Ostwald here, and his doctrine, that there is no wealth but life, is the foundation of that biotechnics which I learned from Geddes." (Unpublished letter, dated July 18, 1936, from Lewis Mumford.)

But this is true also: though Ruskin's ideas have reappeared in subsequent criticism, they retain unique value in their original context. For they are embodied in a literary form, itself as many-sided and organic as his interpretation of life.

